



Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
Tuesday 27 October at 09.20 LOW N-1/201

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**Gianni
Pittella**

- **Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 15 October 2015**
- **Commission work programme 2016**

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We urge the Council and all member states to use the La Valletta summit as an occasion to put in place a comprehensive strategy with African countries; one which embraces not only the migration dimension, but also a real economic and political long-term partnership in order to boost the socio-economic development of the continent.

We call on the European Commission to make more resources available to Western Balkan governments to help deal with the refugee crisis in a coordinated and humane way. We fully support EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans and considers enlargement a tool to build stable societies based on democratic values. We have to interact better and work together in order to face both enlargement and the refugee crisis, rejecting the idea of a European fortress. Our vision is for a stronger union that tackles the imbalances in the system. Jobs and growth instead of austerity and recession, Economic union that works for citizens, Fair taxation: fighting the tax cheats, Decent work for all, Social rights in Europe. Make social issues central to the economic and monetary union, putting social rights and standards for all Europeans on equal terms with economic goals.

We call for a new Europe that should be at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

We ask for a flexible application of European budgetary rules for countries directly affected by the influx of refugees.



**Jens
Geier**

General budget of the European Union for 2016

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To ensure that we can handle the refugee crisis in an efficient and co-ordinated way we need to have the resources available to do it. That is why we have called for an extra 800 million to be made available to meet the challenge in the 2016 EU budget. Although the most pressing issue for the EU is tackling the refugee crisis we cannot lose sight of the other major challenges we face - lack of growth and competitiveness in the EU and high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people. That is why we are calling for an extra €473.2 million in 2016 for the Youth Employment Initiative and an extra €1.3 billion for Horizon 2020, the EU's research and development fund, and the Connecting Europe Facility, which funds cross border infrastructure projects.



**Norbert
Neuser**

Ebola crisis: long-term lessons

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We can only prevent future outbreaks of Ebola and other potentially global epidemics, if the people of the affected countries trust the measures and the health care services. The EU must accept its responsibility and take measures to help affected countries own the strengthening of their health systems. Furthermore, there are still question-marks about the long-term consequences of an Ebola infection, which is, why we need to invest in research. Together with fellow MEPs I will be on a mission to Sierra Leone next week. I am eager to listen to those people that suffered from the crisis and hear about their most urgent needs.



**Jeppe
Kofod**

EU-Switzerland agreement on the automatic exchange of financial account information

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This agreement aims at improving the international tax cooperation and compliance. Switzerland is a key player and more transparency is needed. The European Union and Switzerland signed an agreement on 27 May 2015 on the automatic exchange of financial account information, aimed at improving international tax cooperation and compliance. The agreement represents an important step in ongoing efforts to clamp down on tax fraud and tax evasion. Under the agreement, the EU and Switzerland will automatically exchange information on the financial accounts of each other's residents, starting in 2018.



**Maria Joao
Rodrigues**

Perspectives and review of the Europe 2020 strategy

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The mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy is long overdue and it is currently not clear which direction the Commission will take. With regard to the strategy itself the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis and the subsequent austerity policies are calling the achievement of the employment and social targets into question. If the Union wants to make progress with regard to the social and employment targets laid down in the Europe 2020 strategy, the Commission should come forward with an ambitious social agenda and complement the European Monetary Union by a strong social dimension.

**Guillaume Balas****Use of genetically modified food and feed**

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The possibility for the member states to restrict or prohibit the use of genetically modified food and feed on their territory, when a majority of Europeans express mistrust in GMOs, reverting to national rules constitutes an admission of weakness in terms of our collective ambition. In an open market, the Commission proposing to renationalise GMO use is a return to border controls for produce; that is to say, the disuniting of member states. These days, European agriculture is dependent on GM proteins from third countries. Consequently, we no longer have control over the matter and are dependent on these parts of the world. Changing eating habits in Asia, particularly increasing meat consumption, mean that soya prices will go up significantly in the coming years. Unless we help our farmers go down a different path, they will face considerable difficulties. It's up to citizens to choose Europe's future food and agricultural model, a choice which admittedly is not favourable to GMOs. To deny this would be to worsen any mistrust they might have towards the EU institutions. Nevertheless, supporting national GMO bans would not have been an alibi to maintain the status quo, allowing the Council to stay silent while the Commission approves new GMOs and ignores the majority's wishes. Ultimately, this will lead to the revival of national bias, rather than the increased European sovereignty we all hope for.

**Inmaculada Rodriguez Pinero****Trade in certain goods which could be used for capital punishment, torture or other treatment or punishment**

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The EU must seek to ensure policy coherence and this is paramount when it comes to human rights. The reform of the Anti-Torture regulation proposed by the European Commission in unique in the world and sends a strong message that the EU is profoundly committed to the fight against torture and the death penalty. This regulation seeks to ensure that no European national, company or their subsidiaries will be able to profit from trade in goods and services used for such human rights abuses. But this is not only about stopping anaesthetics from being exported for the death penalty or controlling the export of licit goods that could be manipulated by end-users for torture; this is also about prohibiting any kind of promotion activity, exhibition in market fairs, technical assistance and brokering services provided by EU nationals or companies. Our national authorities must be enabled to immediately stop the export of new devices and technologies that will have no practical use other than to torture, ill-treat or execute individuals. Because this is all about protecting human-dignity and there is no time to waste.

**Victor Bostinaru****Situation in Israel and Palestine**

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We are deeply concerned about the new wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians over the past weeks. Not only do these criminal actions bring additional affliction to the population but they are also endangering the peace process. The only conclusion to the stabbings, car rammings and shooting attacks is that the reality on the ground is not viable and that violence always leads to more violence. Therefore we shall call on both sides to cooperate, to stop condemnations and make a real effort towards reconciliation and the starting of the peace negotiations. We continue to support a two-State solution that must guarantee full respect for the dignity and for the individual and collective rights of ethnic and religious minorities, as equal citizens of their countries, in both States.

**Matthias Groote****Emission measurements in the automotive sector**

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Harmful levels of air pollution are causing over 400,000 premature deaths per year across the European Union. During the last plenary debate on the emission scandal in Strasbourg, Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament demanded that the Commission immediately launches a EU-wide investigation to identify defeat devices used on vehicles sold in Europe irrespective of the brand or fuel used, and covering not only Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) but also other pollutants. Next week MEPs will vote on a motion for resolution on this matter. The S&D has been calling for a Real Driving Emissions (RDE) test procedure for years, which needs to be applied to vehicles from 2017 onwards with no new loopholes in the form of conformity factors or deviation margins to ensure that new diesel cars on EU roads finally meet the Euro 6 limit agreed almost 10 years ago. Furthermore, the S&D want to make sure that the ordinary workers - be it the manufacturer or supplier - don't have to fear for their jobs, because of mistakes made by the top management. Lastly, the emissions scandal should be seen as an opportunity for the European car industry to invest in more targeted R&D in order to move faster towards our next step: The electrification of the European car fleet.

**Seb Dance****Emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants**

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Poor air quality is responsible for over 400,000 premature deaths each year and its economic cost for health is estimated at between €300bn-900bn every year, including direct economic damages of €15bn from lost workdays, €4bn healthcare costs, €3bn crop yield loss and €1bn damage to buildings. Significant non-compliance with existing air quality standards prevents better protection of EU citizens and its environment. Around 90% of Europeans living in cities are exposed to levels of air pollution deemed damaging to human health. In addition, vulnerable socio-demographic groups such as pregnant women, children, the elderly, as well as those from low income groups are particularly affected. Measures to address dangerous pollutants covering all sectors that contribute to air pollution are urgently needed.

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